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Greg Goldman photos

Beverly Baird of Columbia picks her own berries.

U-pick patch provides retired couple therapy; others find plenty of fresh Strawberries

By Angela Bendorf
Missourian staff writer

The fruits of Ed and Elaine Wiggins' labor are about to pay off. This is strawberry season and the Wiggins own and operate Wiggins U-Pick Strawberry Patch south of Columbia.

Although they are later than usual because of cooler spring weather, strawberries will be at their peak this week.

For the Wiggins, it is the second season they have operated the berry farm, which covers only 1½ acres. It's one of the smallest U-pick patches in Boone County.

The Wiggins call their work more of a hobby than a job.

"When I took early retirement I thought this would be a good hobby," said Mr. Wiggins, 59, who retired after 36 years with the University extension service. "Instead of going fishing or hunting I work out in the strawberry patch. This is my recreation," he said.

"I like it because it's outdoors. I was an accountant for 20 years and got tired of desk work," said Mrs. Wiggins, who took early retirement just last week. "It's kind of a therapy for my husband and I to see things grow."

By observing others and through experimentation in their own garden, the Wiggins started a pair of half-acre patches in 1982. However, the berries were not ready to be picked until 1983.

"It takes a year of caring for them. You plant strawberries one year and the next year they're ready," Mr. Wiggins said.

"This is a very labor intensive crop," Mrs. Wiggins said. "It takes a lot of hand labor."

The Wiggins planted another half-acre patch that will bear the sweet fruit just in time for next year's pickers. Mr. Wiggins calls these strawberries "the babies."

"The 1½ acres is all we anticipate having," he said. "Our objective is to raise a nice crop of berries for our customers. They need to be fertilized, mulched in the winter, renovated from year to year, and kept weed-free."

Mr. Wiggins also irrigates the patches from a lake he has on his 20-acre farm.

"This is the nicest patch I've seen," said Beverly Baird, 234 E. Parkway Drive. Baird is a customer who returned to the patch this season after picking 40 quarts of

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Ed and Elaine Wiggins amid their strawberry patch off Old Mill Creek Road.

Council discusses corner Developer has plans for lot

By Laura Guest and Steve Visser
Missourian staff writers

The southeast corner of Providence Road and East Broadway is a lot the City Council has its eye on.

The council is considering purchasing the land, which some of its members consider an eyesore. The lot is undeveloped except for a vacant basement.

Public Works Director Ray Beck told the council Monday night that a right hand turn lane is needed at the corner and suggested the council could either buy the entire 12,000-square-foot tract or just the west corner needed for the turn lane.

Beck said purchasing the entire lot might be a cheaper solution because building a turn lane will cut into one wall of the vacant basement.

The city would then have to repair the structure.

After some discussion, the council defeated a motion by Fifth Ward Councilwoman Barbara McDonald to purchase the entire tract.

Turner Jones, attorney for the owner of the property, Gladys Roth, said she has plans to develop the property and asked the council to purchase only the portion needed for the turn lane.

But McDonald said she thinks the entire tract should be purchased.

"This corner has been blighted for as long as I can remember," she said. "It's a tad bit of an embarrassment as the entrance to the major downtown shopping area."

McDonald said the present situation constitutes a "golden opportunity" for the city to get its turn lane and use the rest of the tract as a pocket park.

Fourth Ward Councilman Pat Barnes agreed, saying the important thing is for the city to acquire the land.

Barnes also said that by acquiring the tract the city can build the turn lane if it wants, or just use the property for a park.

But Mayor John Westlund cautioned against limiting the city's options. He also said he'd like to see a

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School districts vote on property tax size

By Vicki McCash
Missourian staff writer

Voters in Columbia, Hallsville, Sturgeon and Centralia go to the polls today to decide on the size of their property taxes.

School districts in Columbia, Hallsville and Sturgeon have called property tax levy elections to circumvent the effects of Proposition C rollbacks that went into effect in January 1983. According to that state law, school districts must roll back property taxes each year by half the amount they receive from a special 1-cent sales tax earmarked for education.

Columbia voters will vote on a levy of 16 cents, which will allow the district to maintain taxes at the same level as last year. The Columbia Board of Education also hopes to improve teachers' salaries with the

additional \$450,000 to be raised from the levy.

Boone County Clerk Wendy Noren said voters in a few county precincts have been notified that they will vote today at different polling places than they usually do. If voters have questions, they can call the Boone County Clerk's office at 874-7518 or 874-7438.

In Centralia, voters will decide whether they want a one-year levy of 35 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation for road maintenance and repair. Voters in Centralia have approved this levy every year for 40 years.

The Sturgeon school district is asking for a 95-cent increase in its levy. Taxes were rolled back there by 82 cents last year and are expected to decrease another 40 cents this year.

Last year, property owners in Sturgeon paid \$4.17 per \$100 assessed valuation. This year, if the ballot is-

sue passes, owners will pay \$4.72 after the \$1.12 rollback.

Frank Curtis, superintendent of Sturgeon Public Schools, said two-thirds of the money that district would receive from the levy would be used to raise the teacher salary base from \$10,720 to \$12,000.

Hallsville voters will decide on a 75-cent levy. In that district, taxes were rolled back \$1.19 last year. This year's rollback is estimated to be about 57 cents more.

Last year, property owners in Hallsville paid \$3.33 per \$100 of assessed valuation. If the levy passes this year, they will pay \$3.51 after the Proposition C rollback.

Hallsville Superintendent Ralph Powell said one-third of the levy would be used to give teachers the raises that are on the salary schedule; another third would be used to increase the base pay of \$13,000; and a third would be used to raise the salaries of non-certified staff and purchase supplies and equipment.

A two-thirds majority is required for passage of the ballot issues in Columbia, Hallsville and Sturgeon. The Centralia question will pass with a simple majority.

Columbia woman murdered

By Jay Hershey
Missourian staff writer

Sunday, on the night of her 30th birthday, a Columbia woman was fatally shot in her home. The Boone County Sheriff's Department has charged her ex-husband with her murder.

Theresa Diane McMillin, 1409 Golf Blvd., was pronounced dead from a pistol shot to the head at 10:07 p.m. Sunday at University Hospital.

Minutes after the shooting, the victim's ex-husband, Christopher McMillin, 34, of Kansas City, Mo., was arrested. He was walking to his car, holding their daughter under his arm and gripping a pistol in his hand, Sheriff Charlie Foster said.

Mr. McMillin surrendered without resisting, Foster said.

He was arraigned Monday in Columbia and charged with capital murder.

The charge carries a sentence of either the death penalty or 50 years imprisonment without parole.

Foster said Mrs. McMillin was

Ex-spouse charged in shooting

afraid of her ex-husband, who he said had threatened her life numerous times.

Foster also said that whenever Mrs. McMillin knew Mr. McMillin was in Columbia, she and their 2-year-old daughter would stay with her parents, Rex and Mary Hauber, also of Columbia.

She did not know he was in town Sunday night.

Foster said Mr. McMillin went to his former wife's home between 8:30 and 9 p.m. When she would not open the door, he tore the screen from a window in the rear of the house and climbed inside.

A friend of Mrs. McMillin arrived at the house just after Mr. McMillin entered, Foster said. Mr. McMillin, holding a .25 caliber pistol on his former wife, met him at the door.

Mr. McMillin aimed the gun at the friend, but Mrs. McMillin knocked his arm down as the gun went off.

Mr. McMillin then slammed the door.

The friend jumped in his car, Foster said, and drove to Mrs. McMillin's parents' house, about a block away. He told her parents what had happened and they immediately called the 911 emergency number.

When Sgt. O.J. Stone arrived, Foster said, he found Mr. McMillin, still armed, with the youngster under his arm. He was heading for his car, which was parked about two blocks from the house.

Before Stone arrived, Mr. McMillin already had called for an ambulance, Foster said.

"He then picked up the child and started off," Foster said. He was arrested about three houses down the street.

"There were people running around on the street screaming 'That's him! That's him!'"

Local lawyers see no prejudice against women

By Jay Hershey
Missourian staff writer

There is no discrimination against women lawyers in Columbia, local lawyers say. But only four of about 21 law firms practicing here have women as full partners, and one of those is a firm consisting only of women.

About 12 percent of the lawyers in Columbia are women.

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is illegal for business partnerships to name new partners on the basis of sex, race, religion or national origin. The ruling made it possible for a female lawyer in Atlanta to sue the law firm that once employed her on the grounds that it denied her partnership because she is a woman.

"Hooraay!" was Anne Starnes' comment on the ruling.

Starnes is a staff attorney for Mid-Missouri Legal Services Corp., a private, not-for-profit group that provides legal services for the poor. When she was hired as the second woman on the five-person staff, Starnes

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says, "I was told it was a compliment to me."

Few people expected her boss to employ two women at once, she says. Nonetheless, she says women lawyers in central Missouri are not discriminated against.

A few local lawyers say women lawyers in male-dominated partnerships often get stuck with less glamorous cases such as divorces and adoptions.

"It often seems that women tend to get more traditionally female-oriented cases," says Gwendolyn Froeschner, a partner in Petri, Shurtliff, Froeschner & Smith, the only all-women law firm in Columbia.

Gena Trueblood, an associate at Smith, Lewis, Rogers & Beckett, says she practices all kinds of law but she refuses to do the so-called "typically female" cases.

This area of law is generally known as family practice, and Trueblood says it is

"particularly unpleasant." It is unpleasant, she says, because the clients relate poorly with one another and settlements are difficult to reach. Trueblood says one reason women lawyers tend to get stuck in family practice is because women seeking divorces are more comfortable with female attorneys.

"I have worked for a law firm in Columbia for three years and have not been discriminated against," Trueblood says.

Bob Bailey, an academic counselor at the University School of Law, says, "As far as I know there is no discrimination in Columbia but my experience is rather limited and I'm a male."

Mrs. Froeschner says she and her partners formed an all-woman firm not because they were discriminated against in male-dominated firms but because their working relationship is better.

"The four of us happen to work together in an open way which we might not have been able to in a male partnership," she says.

Columbia lawyer Ann K. Covington also

applauds last week's Supreme Court ruling. "I think a person should be judged on the basis of qualifications," she says.

Covington joined the firm of Butcher, Cline, Mallory & Covington as a full partner in 1981; she is the firm's first and only woman partner. She says she has not been restricted to "female-oriented" cases.

Marvin Tofler, a local lawyer, says the Atlanta case doesn't really apply to the situation in Columbia.

"(The Atlanta case) involved a large firm that was very cliquish," he says.

Norm Lampton, a partner in the local firm of Cronan, Robinson, Faber & Pape, says he has seen no discrimination against female lawyers in Columbia. Lampton works with a woman partner, Barbara Pape, and says she gets "a full gamut of cases," mostly personal injury and criminal defense. Lampton has worked with Pape for two years.

Karen Shelton, the director of the University School of Law placement center, says that in 1983, 48 of the school's 150 graduates were women. This is a big increase in the

number of women graduates from five years ago, she says. Nine of the 48 elected to remain in central Missouri, and nineteen of the 48 went into private practice.

Prospective employers take different things into consideration for women and men. Women often are asked such questions as "Are you married? Do you have children? Do you plan to have children?" The panel discussed rationales behind and tactics for dealing with such questions.

Most of the firms that come to interview on campus are from large cities, Shelton says. "Their attitude might be different from a small town firm, because the visibility of the small town lawyer is greater," she says.

Shelton says a lawyer from a small town in northern Missouri once told a female UMC law student he thought she was a good applicant, but because she was a woman he couldn't hire her.

According to Shelton, the lawyer said, "I would hesitate to hire you because if we were having coffee at eleven at night people might talk."